

Racism in Chile



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- **Date:** 8 October 2012
- **Subject:** English
- **Class:** Twelfth grade
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Introduction

First of all, and before we talk about racism, and our national reality, we must know what specifically means "discrimination". An online dictionary defines the word as the "distinct treatment of an individual or group to their disadvantage; treatment or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit." Discrimination hurts, but how much?

Racism is only one type of discrimination, and is a major problem in a society like ours. As such, I thought interesting to investigate this topic. Discrimination is never ending, and there is always people who think it is right to discriminate others based on their race or appearance, while there are others who don't think that way.

This report attempts to cover both sides in a fair way, so that you can understand both sides of the story, thoroughly.

Discrimination

As specified earlier, discrimination can be defined as the "distinct treatment of an individual or group to their disadvantage". Humans are, by nature, discriminators. People may discriminate others based on their age, race, level of studies, socioeconomic status, political preferences, language, religion, et cetera.

According to Argentinean lawyer Roberto Gargarella's book *Derecho y Grupos Desaventajados,* there are effectively minor groups of people who have not been able to incorporate themselves into their societies; those groups are constantly discriminated and are under permanent subordination.

Historically, Chileans - mostly those from the higher socioeconomic status - have discriminated the working-class people, the Mapuches, and more recently, the Peruvians.

Racism



Racism is considered a type of discrimination. It occurs when members of a certain race, who share similar characteristics, believe their races can be ranked as innately superior to others.

Contemporary examples of racism worldwide include the Ku Klux Klan movement *(three members of the KKK pictured)*, Adolf Hitler's Nazism, the South African *apartheid*, and in Chile, the "Pacification" of the Araucanía.

The Ku Klux Klan is a highly conservative movement, which flourished in the 1860s in the south of the United States of America. The movement promotes white supremacy, white nationalism, anti-communist, and is against immigration to the United States. The group expresses their hatred through terrorism. An example of their attacks is the Greensboro massacre, which occurred on 3 November 1979; the Ku Klux Klan, along with members of the American Nazi Party killed several people while the Communist Workers Party of the United States was attempting to organize industrial workers, mainly black, in North Carolina.





Meanwhile, Adolf Hitler's Nazi philosophy promoted that the so-called Aryan master race was superior to all other races. After he was elected democratically President of Germany, his "reign of terror" began. For a number of factors, which included the humiliation Germans suffered post-World War I, and the increasing German nationalism, Hitler commanded one of the most terrible events in history: the Holocaust. More than six million people were killed - the number may be lower or higher, there are no official registries from the time, only estimates -, mainly Jews, Romani (known in Chile as *gitanos*), Polish and Soviet people, and others regardless of their German or non-German ethnic origin.

South Africa was, more recently, the scenario of one of the most discriminatory laws ever promulgated worldwide: the *apartheid*. The *apartheid* promoted racial segregation against the black majority which resides in South Africa, and was promulgated by the National Party governments, which ruled the country for half a century, between the 1940s and 1994. The word *apartheid*, ironically, comes from the Afrikaans language. The *apartheid* legislation classified the people in four groups: "native", "white", "coloured" (black) and "Asian". The residential areas were segregated, often forcefully. The black people upraised and protested against the *apartheid* laws, but it wasn't until 1994 when the *apartheid* finally ended, with the election of Nelson Mandela from the African National Congress.

Chilean reality: racism in our country

As the world goes increasingly globalized, people begin to immigrate to other countries more often, countries which they see as their opportunity to overcome poverty. Chile, an oasis of political and economic stability in South America, has become a magnet for illegal migrants from its less fortunate neighbors, including Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, but many of those who come find themselves subject to prejudice or racism.



A study by the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies in San Diego said economic policies implemented by the government of Alberto Fujimori in Peru in the 1990s displaced many of Peru's poor, fueling the migration to Chile. Many Chileans scoff at the Peruvian day laborers who gather in the capital's central square, the historic Plaza de Armas, and cases of mistreatment based on race or ethnicity are reported by the media on a daily basis.

The indigenous population in Chile is small compared with that Peru and Bolivia, and many indigenous immigrants, like their Chilean counterparts, face discrimination based on their darker skin or Indian features.

In 2005, a 15-year-old black Ecuadoran girl living in the northern city of Antofagasta tried to run away from home and return to Ecuador without a passport. When picked up by authorities, she told them she had fled to escape her classmates who teased her mercilessly, calling her "ugly black girl" (*negra fea*) and "coal face" (*care carbón*).



However, racism in Chile is not limited to those who migrate from other countries. Throughout the history of the country, Chileans have also discriminated native indigenous people, most importantly, the Mapuches.

During Spanish colonizations, the *conquistadores* killed thousands of natives from the northernmost and southernmost areas of Chile, including those from the Atacameño, Diaguita, Selknam, and Yagán people.

The Mapuches were the group of indigenous who fought the most against the Spanish Empire and later, against the Republic of Chile. The efforts made during the War of Arauco, which lasted for almost three centuries, came to an end when the Chilean Republic reached an agreement with Mapuche toquis in the

1870s. The Pacification of the Araucanía, however, was not as wonderful as the Mapuche toquis thought. The Mapuches suffered racial segregation, as they were driven off their land and destined to “reducciones”, small pieces of land, not very useful for planting.

They have since fought to recover their lands and for their autonomy. The Mapuches indigenous believe that the War of Arauco and subsequent Pacification was made only on the grounds of racism.

Juan Enrique Vega, Chilean Ambassador of the Permanent Mission before International Organizations, stated in May 2012 that, despite people trying to hide the fact, “Chile is a racist country, with a historic racist background. In fact, all history texts say that, in the military defeats against Peru and Bolivia, Chile won them only because of the country’s racial homogeneity. This is something that cannot be hidden and that is noticed by international organizations such as the United Nations.”

Recently, the National Congress of Chile promulgated the Anti-Discrimination Law (Ley Antidiscriminación), also known as the Zamudio Law (Ley Zamudio), following the murder of a homosexual man by members of a Neo-Nazi group. Violators to the Anti-Discrimination Law includes all those who discriminate someone or a group because of their “race, ethnic group, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, politic opinión or ideology, religión or belief, participation in community groups, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, age, personal appearance, disease, or disability”, and risk fines of up to 3,500 dollars.

Now, the question, who is in favour of racism in Chile and who is not?



The Neo-Nazi movement in Chile, which was known as the National Socialist Movement of Chile (Movimiento Nacional Socialista de Chile) and which dissolved in August 2012, declared itself as being “very in favour of Chilean race supremacy,” and is “anti-Jews, and anti-gay.” Among its reasons, the movement states that “it is important to keep races pure; the less you accept people from different races, the less your race is deformed, and your race will be more pure.” The movement “believes and promotes positive racism, which is understood as the preservation and separation of our Chilean race. As a result of the previous statement, we are against racial mixture.”

On the other hand, from a Roman Catholic point of view, a report from Alberto Hurtado University states that, “the migrant is that foreigner in which Jesus wants to be recognized; to host him, and to be solidary with him is an obligation […] of fidelity to the own Christian identity.” The report partially blames “the new times” of the racism problem, and quotes Pope John Paul II as condemning racism.

Conclusion

As you could see, racism can be very hurtful to a society. Our country was not the exception to such a anomaly. I think that racism should not be permitted anywhere, since it only provokes damage, and it will never let us to live our life in peace.

We have to begin to think that, with this thing called globalization, things will be way more different than our parents, grandparents, ancestors thought they would be. There is more freedom, freedom to travel, freedom to say whatever we want, freedom for anything. But such freedom should not be used to express hatred against others.

"The biggest problem throughout the history of man is the fact that racism is anything but an anomaly."

Diego Grez Cañete

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